



# MARYLAND BIRDLIFE

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Cover: Young Great Horned Owl at Hart Island, Baltimore County,  
 May 6, 1978. Photo by Bob Ringler.



## MARYLAND'S FIRST FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER

*Hal Wierenga*

On September 23, 1978, Wayne Klockner, Scott Mele and I were manning a strategically located picnic table at Sandy Point State Park enjoying the overhead spectacle of thousands of arriving geese and a good flight of migrant hawks (including a dozen Ospreys, a Merlin that came in and landed right beside us, and two Peregrine Falcons about an hour apart). The sky was mostly cloudy, winds were NE about 20 mph, and the visibility was excellent. Then suddenly, about 2 pm, our attention to "sky-watching" was thoroughly disrupted for the remainder of the day by the brief episode I shall attempt to describe in the following paragraphs.

A kingbird-like flycatcher appeared low over the South Beach area about 100 yards to our south, flying into the wind and winging steadily in our direction; it passed nearly overhead at a height of only about 30 feet, and then soon vanished from sight behind a nearby stand of reeds to our north. Since Eastern Kingbirds (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) are largely gone from Maryland by late September, the bird received our careful attention as it flew by.

We were immediately struck by its conspicuously pale gray back, and as it approached, we began to suspect it might turn into a Western Kingbird (*T. verticalis*). But as it rose slightly to pass overhead, we could clearly see that its breast and belly were white (not gray and yellow) and that its dark tail not only lacked white outer edges, but was in fact very deeply notched or forked. At this point, I considered the possibility it might be a Gray Kingbird (*T. dominicensis*) and checked for that species' thick bill and dark ear patch; the bill was much too thin and the ear patch was lacking.

The bird was then beyond us and heading away, but the light was much improved at this new angle, and all three of us instantly noted the bird's very dark cap, which contrasted sharply with its pale back as we viewed it from behind. At that moment, the thought of Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Muscivora tyrannus*) first came to mind, and all the pieces of the puzzle began to fit.

The bird's flight, as it beat steadily into the wind at heights of about 5-30 feet, could be described as rolling, or semi-undulating, and more reminiscent of a shrike than a kingbird. Shortly after it had passed us, it disappeared beyond and below a nearby 15-foot mound; and after a mad dash to the summit, we had a short, final glimpse as the

bird left an apparent brief perch in a small, isolated tree and continued northward along the beach and out of sight behind the reeds. Despite diligent searching for the rest of the day, and most of the next, the flycatcher was not seen again.

About an hour after the bird disappeared, Klockner, Mele and I regrouped for a few minutes to write down the details of our observations. Despite the brevity (about one minute) of the sighting, made through 7X and 10X binoculars, we completely agreed on all of the important field marks of the bird: nearly kingbird-sized, white underparts, very pale gray back, dark cap, dark tail about 3 inches long with a pronounced fork about 1 inch deep, and neatly rounded outer tail feathers on either side of the fork. Based on those characters, we believe the bird was, in fact, a Fork-tailed Flycatcher, very nearly matching the immature pictured in Peterson and Chalif's "A Field Guide to Mexican Birds" (1973) but with an even deeper tail fork than is illustrated.

Fork-tailed Flycatchers are native from southern Mexico south through southern South America. They have turned up as occasional stragglers in North America for over 150 years, chiefly from mid-August through November along the Atlantic Coast, where records exist from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and at scattered locations from Maine (at least 5) south to Florida (at least 5, including a short-tailed immature like "ours" on the comparable date of September 17, 1976). Recently, North American sightings have increased and become annual - 1 in 1975, 5 in 1976, 2 in 1977, and at least 2 in 1978 (Sandy Point, and one at Cape May on October 11 that raised New Jersey's total to at least 6).

It is generally believed, and in some cases proven by specimens, that virtually all of these vagrant Fork-tailed Flycatchers are of the nominate, southernmost race (*M. t. tyrannus*) which nests in Argentina and Chile, migrates north to winter (during our summer) in northern South America, and should be returning south to breed during our autumn. This odd pattern of northward straying is not yet well understood or explained, but in addition to Fork-tails, the phenomenon has been attributed to other migrant South American flycatchers as well: Tropical Kingbird (*T. melancholicus chloronotus*) in Maine, October 1915; probably the Variegated Flycatcher (*Empidonomus varius* ssp?) in Maine, November 1977; and possibly others. It makes one wonder which rarity will turn up next.

1216 Tyler Avenue, Annapolis 21403



## ANHINGA NEAR BELLEVUE, TALBOT COUNTY

Henry T. Armistead

On September 2, 1978, my wife, Liz, and I observed an Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*) soaring over the center of Ferry Neck one mile northwest of Bellevue, Talbot County. From 4:15 to 4:30 p.m. we had an unobstructed view. Easily seen were the very long, wide tail, the effortless soaring with scarcely any flapping, and the sharp contrast

between the light brown breast and the dark color of the rest of the underparts. This contrast indicated it was probably an adult female. When first seen the Anhinga was over one thousand feet away at an angle of forty-five degrees above the horizon. The color and tail length, although visible, were not as easy to see then as they were later when the bird circled closer, although still at a great height, until it was directly overhead. It was sunny. The light was behind us. We were looking to the northeast using 10 x 50 Bushnell binoculars.

Our attention was first directed to the Anhinga after we had stopped the car to watch a soaring Bald Eagle. Normally this is an event in itself. We see eagles only three or four times out of the 65-70 days we spend in the Bellevue area each year. This one was a magnificent, shaggy immature, easily recognized even from a cruising automobile. Another bird appeared in my binocular field which I immediately assumed was a cormorant. After seeing it several more times it became evident that it was an Anhinga because of its soaring flight and large tail. An Osprey was also circling with these two birds. Three times all three birds were in my binocular field simultaneously. The Anhinga seemed just as skillful at soaring as the eagle and Osprey.

September 2, 1978, was a beautiful fall day with fair skies, a temperature range of 62°-82°, and light northeast wind at five miles per hour. In addition to the large species of soaring birds mentioned above many others were making a conspicuous aerial presence. After observing the Anhinga we continued on our way to the Bellevue-Oxford Ferry and saw the following feeding in the skies over these two towns: 100 Herring Gulls, 600 Laughing Gulls, 4 Common Nighthawks, and 60 Chimney Swifts.

Reports of Anhinga north of its normal range should be made with a certain amount of prudence and respect for several reasons. 1) Anhinga does not seem to wander nearly as much as some other large southern species of the wide open spaces. Brown Pelican, Magnificent Frigatebird, Wood Stork, White Ibis, and Swallow-tailed Kite have all occurred more frequently in the Northeast. Table 1 shows the only coastal records the author can find north of North Carolina, a total of sixteen, ten of these from Virginia. Eight are in the late summer or early fall period. Five are in the spring. The two previous Maryland records, the only ones in Table 1 represented by specimens, lack specific dates and localities. Such intensively birded states as New Jersey, Massachusetts, and New York did not have any Anhinga sight records until 1971, 1974, and 1977 respectively. There are no Pennsylvania records. 2) Double-crested Cormorant, now in the process of expanding its breeding range and increasing in some areas, can easily be confused with Anhinga, especially since it does occasionally soar (Bent, 1964). 3) Furthermore, when seen overhead the undertail coverts and tail extend considerably from the cormorant's body possibly leading an anxious birder to the wrong conclusion.

I have seen Anhingas previously in most of the coastal states from Texas to South Carolina, including numerous soaring birds in the Everglades. As if to highlight the southern associations of

the weekend of this sighting, a Prothonotary Warbler appeared in our yard feeding in an apple tree the next morning (September 3, 1978). The Anhinga was species 236 for our property, the warbler number 237.

Table 1. Records of Anhinga in Coastal States north of North Carolina

Number	Date	Locality	Observer	Reference
1*	c.1805	Elkridge Landing, Patapsco River, Md.	?	Stewart & Robbins (1958)
1	c.1895	Pocomoke River, Md.	?	Stewart & Robbins (1958)
1*	Aug. 1935	Dismal Swamp, Va.	Herbert Barber	Murray (1952)
1f	1st week, Aug. 1936	Roach's Run Sanctuary, Va.	Paul Bartsch <i>et al.</i>	Murray (1952)
1	7/25/39	Amelia County, Va.	Charles Kernan	Murray (1952)
1f	5/5/52	Stumpy Lake, Norfolk, Va.	W. F. Rountrey	<i>Audubon Field Notes</i>
3	6/12/56	Stumpy Lake, Norfolk, ..	W. F. Rountrey	<i>Audubon Field Notes</i>
3	6/18/56	Va.	Paul W. Sykes	<i>Notes</i>
2	4/22/57	Back Bay N.W.R., Va.	W. F. Rountrey P. Delaney	<i>Audubon Field Notes</i>
1	8/28/70	Richmond, Va.	Fred R. Scott	<i>American Birds</i>
1*	9/25/71	Cape May, N.J.	Kenneth Berlin <i>et al.</i>	<i>American Birds</i>
1	10/7-8/73	Chincoteague N.W.R., Va.	Eunice Liner Barry Sperling	<i>American Birds</i>
1*	5/14/74	Plum Island, Mass.	Mary Baird Nancy Claflin	<i>American Birds</i>
2	5/4/75	Alexandria, Va.	J. M. Abbott	<i>Raven</i> 47:44
1m*	7/23/77	S. Oyster Bay, Seaford, L.I., N.Y.	T. H. Davis A. J. Lauro	<i>Kingbird</i> 28:3-4
1	4/15/78	Norfolk, Va.	R. L. Anderson D. L. Hughes <i>et al.</i>	<i>American Birds</i>
1f	9/2/78	Bellevue, Md.	Henry & Mary Armistead	

\*First State record

#### REFERENCES

- American Birds and Audubon Field Notes. The Anhinga sightings listed in Table 1 may be found in the appropriate seasonal issues of these journals.
- Bent, Arthur Cleveland (1964, 1922). Life histories of North American petrels and pelicans and their allies (N.Y., Dover) p. 240.
- Murray, Joseph James (1952). A check-list of the birds of Virginia (Virginia Society of Ornithology) p. 29.
- Stewart, Robert E. and Chandler S. Robbins (1958). Birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia (U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service) p. 51.



## MIGRATION CASUALTIES IN DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE

*D. Girard Jewell and Mary M. Jewell*

During the fall and spring migrations, millions of birds fly over the Baltimore area. The 13-story Maryland State Office Center at Howard and Preston streets is on their migration route. All other buildings in the vicinity have 3 stories or fewer. No floodlights are in use at night. In April and May and again from August to November, dead or injured birds appear at the Center in surprising numbers, creating extra work for the grounds-keeping staff, but also providing some interesting data on species movement through the area.

Below are listed the observations of migration casualties at the Center over a two-year period beginning November 16, 1976. Early records were made more or less at random; however, in the fall of 1978, a regular routine was initiated to provide for greater consistency in the future. Each weekday morning between 7:30 and 8:00 a.m. the area within

Table 1. Birds found dead or alive at the Maryland State Office Center

<u>Date</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Condition</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Fall, 1976			
Nov. 16	Northern Waterthrush	dead	
Spring, 1977			
Apr. 4	Chipping Sparrow	dead	
Apr. 11	Brown Creeper	dead	
May 12	Chimney Swift	dead	
May 16	Wood Thrush	dead	
May 18	Brown Thrasher	dead	
	Ovenbird	dead	
Fall, 1977			
Aug. 22	Black-and-white Warbler	dead	
	Magnolia Warbler	dead	
Oct. 7	Rufous-sided Towhee	dead	
Oct. 11	Wood Thrush (2)	dead	
	White-throated Sparrow	dead	
	Cape May Warbler	dead	
Oct. 13	White-throated Sparrow	dead	
	Common Yellowthroat	dead	female
	Wood Thrush	alive	b*
Oct. 19	Common Yellowthroat	alive	female, b
Oct. 24	Swamp Sparrow	dead	
Oct. 31	Lincoln's Sparrow	dead	
Spring, 1978			
May 8	Wood Thrush	dead	
May 10	Whip-poor-will	alive	male, b

Table 1 (continued). Birds found dead or alive at the Maryland State Office Center

<u>Date</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Condition</u>	<u>Comments</u>	<u>Location</u>
Fall, 1978				
Sept. 5	Common Yellowthroat	dead	male	1
	Common Yellowthroat	dead	immature	2
	Ovenbird	alive	b	3
Sept. 8	Common Yellowthroat	dead	immature	4
	Canada Warbler	dead		5
Sept. 11	Swainson's Thrush	dead		6
	Common Yellowthroat	dead	immature	7
Sept. 18	Brown Thrasher	dead		8
	Swainson's Thrush	dead		9
Sept. 20	Ovenbird	dead		10
	Common Yellowthroat	alive	male, b	11
	Black-and-white Warbler	dead		12
	White-throated Sparrow	dead	dead several days	13
Sept. 25	White-throated Sparrow	dead		14
	Lincoln's Sparrow	dead		15
	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	dead		16
Sept. 27	Blackpoll Warbler	dead		17
Sept. 29	Ovenbird	dead		18
	Ovenbird	alive	b	19
Oct. 3	Common Yellowthroat	alive	male, b	20
	Ovenbird	alive	injured seriously	21
	Ovenbird	dead		22
Oct. 4	Common Yellowthroat	dead	male	23
Oct. 9	Ovenbird	dead		24
Oct. 18	Unidentified warbler	alive	n.c.**	25
Oct. 23	Brown Creeper	alive	n.c.	26
Oct. 24	Common Yellowthroat	alive	female, b	27
	Ovenbird	alive		28
Oct. 30	White-throated Sparrow	dead		29
	Dark-eyed Junco	alive	n.c.	30
Nov. 1	Tufted Titmouse	alive	n.c.	31

\* banded and released

\*\* not captured

the dotted line on the map was checked for casualties. When a dead or injured migrant was discovered, its species and location were recorded.

Those dead birds that could be later used as mounted specimens at either the Tum Suden or Irish Grove Sanctuary were collected under the Federal #PRT2-846BA and State #W01185 salvage permits belonging to the Maryland Ornithological Society. Some birds were found alive, but in a weakened condition, unable to fly. These were placed in a closed box in a quiet room, later to be banded and released in an environment with a



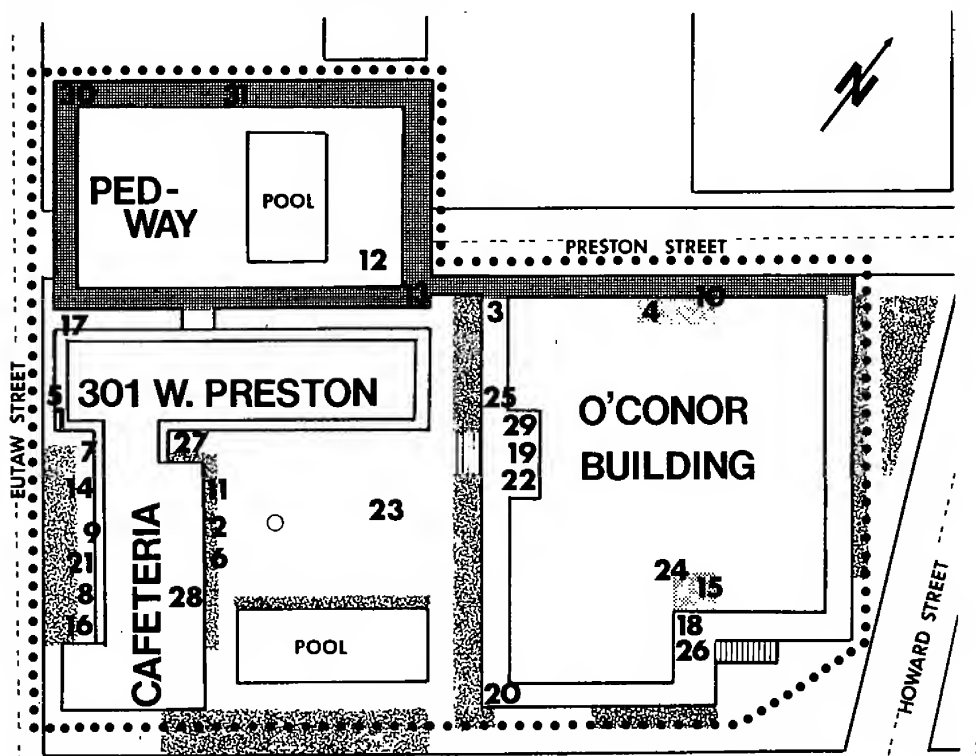


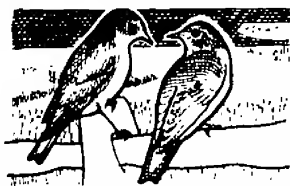
Figure 1. Map of the 13-story 301 Building and the 5-story O'Conor.

more abundant food source. All banding procedures were performed by Mrs. Gladys Cole under Federal and State permits #7153. One bird required more attention, being fed for several days before its strength returned and it was able to be released.

Because of the original lack of consistency in the method of observation, comparisons between seasons are to be avoided. However, the general absence of orientation toward any particular compass heading among the fall of 1978 casualties is interesting. Combined with the fact that in only a few cases were dead birds found to have their necks broken or to exhibit any signs of external injuries, this suggests that instead of colliding with the buildings in flight, some migrants may have simply exhausted themselves.

We hope that future observations and possibly some banding recoveries will provide more information on these migrants.

13 Beyda Court, Baltimore 21236



## THE SEASON

### BREEDING SEASON, JUNE 1 - JULY 31, 1978

*Robert F. Ringler*

The current breeding bird atlas projects across the state continue to more clearly define the breeding ranges of species nesting in Maryland. In several cases significant expansions or recessions in range have been established. This column would appreciate pertinent information from any of the atlas projects that would be of general interest to the public.

The summer of 1978 was not marked by any unusual weather patterns. June was near normal in temperature and precipitation and July averaged two degrees cooler than normal with about one inch more rain than normal. The rain was well distributed throughout June, but in the following month major storms passed on July 2-4, 25, and 31.

Though the above weather systems probably did not adversely affect the breeding birds, the past winter again took its toll among species that regularly winter in part or all of their local breeding ranges. The following table shows the percent decrease for ten such species as tabulated from the fifty 1977 and 1978 Breeding Bird Survey routes in Maryland.

<u>Species</u>	<u>% Decrease</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>% Decrease</u>
Common Bobwhite	25.0	Carolina Chickadee	20.5
Killdeer	8.2	Tufted Titmouse	10.1
Belted Kingfisher	28.4	White-breasted Nuthatch	38.0
Common Flicker	17.5	Eastern Bluebird	20.4
Other woodpeckers	16.5	Eastern Meadowlark	23.0

Not included in this list is the Carolina Wren, which had suffered drastically in the previous two winters. From 1977 to 1978 Carolina Wrens showed only a 4.1% decrease on the Maryland BBS routes. Perhaps the surviving population has receded into areas where they are less susceptible to the ravages of the weather. Past losses had been most severe in the western part of the state, where relatively few birds remained to be exposed to the severe winter of 1977-78. On the coastal plain the population seems to be more stable.

Contributors - Henry T. Armistead, Rick Blom, Paul G. DuMont, A. J. Fletcher, Fran Pope, Jan Reese, and Hal Wierenga.

Loons, Tubenoses. Common Loons lingering into the summer were one flying over South Marsh I. on June 2, one at Barren I. on June 4 (Armistead), and one on Deep Creek Lake on June 6 (Pope). As reported by DuMont the following tubenoses were seen on the June 18 pelagic trip off Ocean City: 80 Cory's, 4,500 Greater, 1 Manx, and 600 Sooty Shearwaters plus 1,500 Wilson's Storm Petrels.

Double-crested Cormorants. This species does not breed in Maryland, but sightings during the summer have been on the increase, particularly in Chesapeake Bay. During 1978 these included: 15 at Smith I., June 1 (Armistead); 1 flying down the Potomac at Seneca, June 3 (Robert Warfield); 40 at Lower Hooper I., June 5; 21 at Little Deal I., June 6; 5 at Deal Island Wildlife Management Area, June 7 (Armistead); 5 at Choptank, Caroline Co., June 10 (M. W. Hewitt); 1 at Poplar I., June 10; 2 at Neavitt, Talbot Co., June 12 (Reese); 3 flying south past Pleasure I., Baltimore Co., June 20 (Ringler); 1 at Tanyard, Caroline Co., June 29 (E. Engle); 3 at Windyhill, Talbot Co., July 7; and 1 at Cornersville, Dorchester Co., July 10 (Reese).

Ducks. Armistead reports that the Gadwall seems to be increasing as a breeding bird in lower Chesapeake Bay. This is consistent with reports from other states in the region and they should be looked for in other parts of the bay area. Non-breeding ducks are always observed on rare occasions in the summer in Maryland. The summer of 1978 presented a surprising variety. Armistead observed a pair of American Wigeon at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge on June 5. There was a drake Northern Shoveler on Liberty Reservoir, June 4 (Blom, Ringler). A drake Lesser Scaup was on Brendel's Pond, Howard Co., June 24 (Mark Wallace). A female Common Goldeneye was at Lower Hooper I., June 4 (Armistead). Single Buffleheads were noted on Deep Creek Lake on June 1 (Pope) and at Sandy Pt. on June 4 (Wierenga). A female Oldsquaw hung around Pleasure I., Baltimore Co., June 20-26 (Doug Santoni, Blom, Ringler); Pleasure I. used to be part of Hart I. at the mouth of Back River. Single White-winged Scoters were at South Marsh I. on June 2 (Armistead) and in Talbot County on July 20 (Reese). Armistead saw 7 Surf Scoters on the Manokin River in Somerset County on June 6 and Reese noted one in Talbot County on July 5. A female Surf Scoter remained on Deep Creek Lake through July 26; though it was never observed in flight it was seen diving to avoid a water skier (Gordon Paul). Red-breasted Mergansers were in Talbot County, June 2 (Reese), and on Broadford Reservoir in Mountain Lake Park, June 10 (Pope).

Diurnal Raptors. Wierenga observed three very late Broad-winged Hawks migrating over Annapolis on June 1. Summer reports of Bald Eagles included 2 at Greensboro, Caroline Co., June 10 (M. W. Hewitt) and an adult in Talbot County, June 16 (Reese). Armistead reported 31 active nests of Ospreys on Bloodsworth I. this year. An unusual Osprey observation was of one near Thayerville, Garrett Co., on July 19 (Pope). A female American Kestrel soaring over Poplar I., Talbot Co., on July 18 (Reese) was probably an early fall migrant.

Rails. Soras, which may be rare breeders in the state, were noted with one at Sandy Pt. on June 3 (Wierenga), one at Deal Island Wildlife

Management Area on June 5-7, and 2 at Fairmount WMA, June 6 (Armistead). Black Rails were heard at Sandy Point State Park through July 10 and in Black Marsh, Baltimore Co., in June and July indicating continued localized breeding. The Upper Marlboro Purple Gallinule returned again to the pond where it bred previously. Probable non-breeders were single American Coots on Deep Creek Lake on June 6 (Gordon Paul) and in Talbot County on June 30 (Reese).

Shorebirds. On June 4 Armistead found American Oystercatchers nesting on Hooper I. He found two nests with eggs and another pair with one downy young. A Marbled Godwit was seen at Sandy Pt., July 14 (Sam Droege). Fran Pope reports that Upland Sandpipers had a good season in the Pleasant Valley of Garrett County. Single wandering Willets were seen at Sandy Pt., June 24 and July 31 (Wierenga), and at Poplar I., June 27 (Reese). Reese also found 2 Ruddy Turnstones at Poplar I. on June 10. Late migrant Red Knots were 3 at Holland I., June 2 (Armistead), 1 at Long Marsh I., Eastern Bay, June 2 (Reese), and 2 at Barren I., June 4 (Armistead).

Skua, Gulls. The June 18 pelagic trip reported sighting a South Polar Skua 43 miles ESE of Ocean City. Further documentation and reporting of the status of this bird as a species are awaited. Armistead reports the Greater Black-backed Gull doing well in lower Chesapeake Bay as a breeding bird. An adult Franklin's Gull visited Sandy Pt. on June 22 (Wierenga). In Baltimore County, where there are no breeding gulls, an estimated 5,000 remained through the summer. Most were seen on the Chesapeake Bay shoreline and in the vicinity of the bay islands. About 90% of the birds were Ring-billed Gulls with Greater Black-backed, Herring, and Laughing Gulls numbering in the hundreds. Most of the birds were in various stages of plumage less than full adult; however, several adults were seen. In addition, at least 4 Bonaparte's Gulls were present. Finally, a single Little Gull remained in the area from at least June 20 to July 22. During this period it seemed to be molting from immature to first summer plumage.

Terns, Skimmer. Little Terns seem to be decreasing in the lower Chesapeake, but Reese reported a colony nesting on top of a factory in Cambridge. There were 11 pairs at Sandy Pt. and at least 34 nests on Pleasure I. This species seems to be able to find any available place to nest when other habitat is destroyed or disturbed. A very late Black Tern in breeding plumage was seen near Pleasure I., June 6 (Ringler). The first Baltimore County record of a Black Skimmer was of one seen flying past Pleasure I. on July 16 (Bob Augustine).

Flycatchers. Sallie Thayer reported as Eastern Phoebe nest on the late date of July 21; one of its three eggs hatched on that date, the other 2 never did. Examination of the eggs showed they were punctured, with nearly full-grown chicks inside. She suspects the damage was done by some of the many local House Wrens in that area of Garrett County. The Willow Flycatcher continues to expand as a breeding bird in many parts of the state. Late migrants were an Eastern Pewee singing on Little Deal I., June 6 (Armistead), and an Olive-sided Flycatcher on Gunpowder Falls, June 9 (Mike Resch).

Jay, Nuthatch, Creeper. Wierenga observed 27 Blue Jays that were apparently migrating past Sandy Pt. on June 29. Reese found a White-breasted Nuthatch on the Wye River at Longwoods on July 15. This is an area of the state where they have never been known to breed. Armistead heard a Brown Creeper singing at Bellevue, Talbot Co., on June 2 and 3, and Resch observed a pair courting near Loch Raven, Baltimore Co., also during June. Scattered records of this species nesting throughout the state continue, suggesting that they may go unnoticed in other localities.

Warblers. Late migrant or summer vagrant warblers included a Black-throated Blue singing at Glen Falls, Baltimore Co., June 11 (Dwight Lee), Chestnut-sided and Canada Warblers in Kent Co., June 7 (Floyd Parks), a Northern Waterthrush and a Mourning Warbler banded at Adventure Sanctuary near Potomac on June 1, and a Wilson's Warbler near Cockeysville, June 29 (Jim Stasz).

Bobolink, Finches, Sparrows. A late Bobolink was at Sandy Pt., June 9 (Wierenga). Other late migrants were a Rose-breasted Grosbeak on June 6 (Stasz) and a Pine Siskin on June 10 (Resch), both in Baltimore County, and another Pine Siskin in Prince Georges County on June 1 (Sam Droege). The only Dickcissel reported was a male in northern Baltimore County on June 1 (Blom). A Savannah Sparrow at Tylerton, Smith I. (Armistead), and a White-throated Sparrow banded at Adventure, both on June 1, were also late migrants. Jim Wilkinson reported a Henslow's Sparrow near Finzel Swamp, Garrett Co., in early July. Seaside Sparrows continue nesting on Miller I. in northern Chesapeake Bay and may have expanded to other sites. Swamp Sparrows are currently breeding in all the coastal plain marshes of Baltimore County and may also be expanding elsewhere.

3501 Melody Lane, Baltimore 21207



#### PAST PRESIDENTS OF MOS

Irving E. Hampe	Mar. 1945 - Mar. 1946
Orville W. Crowder	Mar. 1946 - May 1952
Chandler S. Robbins	May 1952 - May 1955
Richard L. Kleen	May 1955 - May 1957
Richard D. Cole	May 1957 - Sept 1957
William N. Shirey	Sept 1957 - May 1958
Dr. Charles J. Stine	May 1958 - Dec. 1959
Marvin W. Hewitt	Jan. 1960 - May 1961
Seth H. Low	May 1961 - May 1962
Mrs. Dorothy A. Mendinhall	May 1962 - May 1965
V. Edwin Unger	May 1965 - May 1971
Dr. Lawrence Zeleny	May 1971 - May 1973
Barclay E. Tucker	May 1973 - May 1976
Lt. Col. William G. Bodenstein	May 1976 - May 1978

## JUNIOR NATURE CAMP REPORT

*Joy Wheeler*

On June 2,3,4, 1978, the nineteenth annual Junior Nature Camp sponsored by the Baltimore Chapter MOS was held at King's Landing Camp on the Patuxent River in Calvert County. There were 55 campers and 25 leaders present. At the end of the session when the campers were asked to evaluate the program, they were warm in their praise for the leaders who had helped them become better acquainted with the rich natural environment of this 250 acre portion of Maryland's coastal plain. Leaders returned the compliment by thanking the campers for their eager acceptance of the intensive field work and for the interest displayed in everything that was offered.

The short time we had for camp, from Friday evening through lunch time on Sunday, was fully scheduled with early morning nature walks, daytime field work in botany, entomology, ornithology, herpetology, ecology, water life studies and evening walks for star gazing and listening for night sounds.

On the first night of camp Fran Robson was quick to capture our interest with her slide show of her studies of wolf behavior. She told us that wolves were once part of the environment of Maryland and that it was through man's misunderstanding of wolf behavior that they are endangered today.

Water life was studied from three different points of view. With Jane Mazur and Wayne Gordon at riverside directing the campers, many interesting things were "fished out" and observed from microscopic size to small fish, the most notable being the hog choaker. The east bank of the Patuxent and the marshes along Cocktown Creek were explored with the help of John Hughes and his assistant, David McCullough. Having the canoes of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation made it possible for every camper to see the differences in the plant life found along the bank of the brackish river and the bank of its fresh water tributary. Several canoeists were quick to spot some water snakes to take back to camp for observation before releasing them back into the marsh. Water life studies also included the study of the ecology of a small fresh water stream under the guidance of David Mosher. David helped make some successful plaster casts of deer and raccoon tracks found along the stream. They were not as successful in catching anything in the Hav-a-hart trap, though the bait was taken by some careful animal. Jean Worthley helped to round out the water life studies by instructing in the ecology of the riverside.

Bird studies were conducted by Doug Hackman, Barbara Ross, Jim Stasz, and Audrey Crush. During the weekend 83 species were seen or heard. Nests of 12 were found. Jim Stasz discovered the highlight of the camp... a Whip-poor-will on a nest with two eggs. Never reported before at JNC, but seen this year, were a Black-crowned Night Heron and a Spotted Sandpiper. Always seen previously at JNC, but missed this year were Green Heron and Field Sparrow. The banders reported 66 birds of 29 species banded, and 8 returns. Barbara Ross and her team of banders were pleased



to have banded a Blue Grosbeak, Summer Tanager, Hooded Warbler, a female Screech Owl, and 3 bluebirds, 2 of them immature.

Two botany classes were offered, Dr. Ben Poscover's botany for beginners, and Dr. Elmer Worthley's botany of non-flowering plants. The beginning botanists used the abundance of blooming wildflowers, Venus' Looking-glass in particular, to learn the parts of a flower and how to use a field guide for identification. The students of non-flowering plants learned that they were as abundant as the flowering varieties if you knew where to look. They were then able to see algae on tree trunks, pink earth fungi, and Royal Ferns as a result of their sharpened powers of observation.

Herpetologists were able to find many varieties of frogs, toads and snakes with the help of Bob Sinners.

Les Epstein, a former Junior Nature Camper himself, came back this year to direct insect studies. He was pleased to find lively campers willing to join him in search of insects even after dark. The light poles at camp attracted an abundance of insects including Luna and Polyphemus moths. Les, a recorder player with an international reputation, could be heard performing as he wandered about the camp in search of insects, his music often competing with the bird songs. When we were kept inside by the heavy shower on Saturday afternoon, Les helped lighten our rainy moments with his superb music.

Dr. Poscover's weather forecasting team of beginners practiced their newly learned techniques using thermometer, hygrometer, and wind gauge to predict the weather for the weekend. Unfortunately, in spite of their optimistic forecast, we had severe thunderstorms on Saturday afternoon. Sunday was fair and mild, just as they had predicted.

Because of the weather on Saturday afternoon, several activities had to be moved indoors: Dave Robson's boomerang demonstration and lecture on flight of birds, and the campfire, led by Barbara McGill. David showed the skill of an expert by throwing and catching a boomerang right there in the dining hall. Barbara showed her skill, not allowing the rain to dampen our spirits by leading us in some rousing songs and teaching us two new ones: Tom Wisner's "Chesapeake Born" and "Dredgin' is My Drudgery." Mr. Wisner made the music available expressly for our use at JNC. The star gazing, scheduled for Saturday night was also rained out, but not completely. Jim Skeens had brought, along with his telescope, many slides of the constellations and other sights in the skies, and was able to give us a glimpse of what we might have seen if the storm had not darkened the skies.

All 25 members and friends of Baltimore Chapter MOS who worked so hard to carry out the planned camp schedule deserve hearty thanks for their willing work in behalf of the camp. They have each received my sincere personal thanks, but with this report I am amplifying those strains throughout the state.



## MID-WINTER CLAY-COLORED SPARROW IN HARFORD COUNTY

*Spike Updegrave*

It was Sunday afternoon, January 15, 1978. Four of us were sitting down to enjoy a lasagna dinner when the phone rang. It was two neighborhood boys in the eleventh grade at Bel Air High School, Dan Vest and Paul Ford. They told me that they had been keying out a sparrow for an hour, and it kept coming up as a Clay-colored Sparrow. Clay-colored Sparrows had not been recorded in mid-winter in Maryland, so I got up from my delicious hot lasagna meal to straighten them out. Needless to say, by the time I returned my dinner was cold. The boys had correctly identified a Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*) at the Fords' feeder in Churchville. The bird was characterized by its extremely small size, brown cheek patch, light median streak through the crown, brown rump, and its distinctive gray nape.

Other MOS and ABA members were contacted for confirmation. During the next 3 weeks and 3 days, 99 out of 115 visitors to our feeder or the Fords' had excellent views of the sparrow. Approximately 120 photographs were taken by Rich Rowlett, Bob Augustine, and Chuck Graham. Many times the sparrow would perch on the window feeder offering birders an excellent sighting from a distance of one foot! This prompted Kathy Klimkiewicz to say: "Darn, he's too close for binoculars."

This Clay-colored Sparrow was the sixth Maryland sighting, but the first from the piedmont and the first in mid-winter. It was about 2,500 miles off course, as they generally winter in Mexico. It is interesting that another Clay-colored Sparrow arrived at the feeder of C. Reeves in Boonton Township, N.J., at almost the same time as our bird; it was present from January 18 to early April, 1978 (*N.J. Audubon* 4:42, 1978).

On Tuesday, February 7, our bird could no longer be found. I do thank this vagrant for giving my wife and me many enjoyable hours of entertainment during our coldest winter ever.

Churchville 21028



## MARY BRIDGET NORRIS, 2ND WINNER OF MOS SCIENCE FAIR AWARD

The MOS Certificate for Achievement in Ornithology was given to Miss Mary Bridget Norris at Baltimore's 23rd Annual Science Fair held at Johns Hopkins University and sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of Baltimore City, the Towson Kiwanis Club and The University. Miss Norris, an eighth grade student at St. Joseph's School in Texas, Md., received a framed certificate, an autographed copy of *Birds of North America*, *A Guide to Field Identification*, and membership in MOS for the year '78-'79. The project was a record of her observations of a nest of Mockingbirds from the time the eggs hatched to the time the young birds fledged. Photographs and tapes of the birds' voices were included.

*Joy Wheeler*

## REVIEWS OF RECENT BOOKS BY MOS MEMBERS

## BLACKWATER

Brooke Meanley. 1978. Tidewater Publishers, Cambridge, Maryland 21613 148pp, 13 drawings, 115 b&w photos, paperback. \$6.00

This is the second book concerning the wildlife of the Chesapeake Bay area by ornithologist Brooke Meanley. This well-illustrated book covers in addition to the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge's 11,000 acres, the surrounding area drained by the Blackwater, Little Blackwater, and Transquaking Rivers. Although the book is predominantly about the area birds and their habitat, it also includes interesting chapters about such mammals as the muskrat, otter, nutria, and the Delmarva fox squirrel. The titles of several chapters that will be of special interest to Maryland birders are Canada Geese from Ungava, The Snow Goose, On the Trail of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, The Timberdoodle, The Atlantic Blue-winged Teal, The Swamp Owl, and the Whistling Swan on the Wintering Ground. There are also informative chapters dealing with foods of marsh ducks, rare birds, Christmas bird counts, and breeding birds of the Blackwater marshes. The author's long association with this area makes the book of value from a historical as well as a biological viewpoint. This book, like its predecessor "Birds and Marshes of the Chesapeake Bay Country," should be in the library of all nature lovers in the mid-Atlantic region.

Matthew C. Perry

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## A FIELD GUIDE TO WILD PLANTS IN WINTER

Robert J. Hurley and D. Girard Jewell. 1978. Tidewater Audiovisual Productions, P.O. Box 1611, Baltimore, Maryland 21203. \$1.50

Through the mail from the Tidewater Audiovisual Productions, I received a small volume with at least three familiar names in it: Robert J. Hurley (Bob is a former Bookstore Chairman for the Baltimore Chapter MOS), D. Girard Jewell (Don was the Extension Services Chairman) and Gladys Cole. Bob and Don, recently turned authors, have dedicated their first book, A Field Guide to Wild Plants in Winter, to Gladys Cole. The attractive features of this trim book make us hope that this is just a beginning for these two authors. It is pocket size with black and white sketches of 60 common wild plants as they appear in the fall and winter. With each sketch is a short identification and a list of page references to three popular field guides so that the dried plant can be compared to pictures of its flowering stage. In the front of the book there is a brief explanation of how to use the book. On the last page the subject of wildflower conservation is seriously discussed with some suggestions on intelligent collecting. An index using common names of the plants is included. This small book, tucked into my Peterson's Field Guide to the Wildflowers, will frequently accompany me into the field, enabling me to become familiar with more than those first three names I mentioned. It will be available in the MOS Bookstore.

Joy Wheeler

## NEW LATE DATE FOR YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON

*Hervey Brackbill*

On November 30, 1977 Miss Teresa Romano and Mrs. Jane Frazier, of the office staff of Woodlawn Cemetery (Baltimore County), asked me to go there and identify a heron that was foraging in Gwynns Falls near their building. I found the bird to be an immature Yellow-crowned Night Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*). This may well have been the same individual reported in *Maryland Birdlife* 34:52, 1978, as having been seen there a week earlier.

2620 Poplar Drive, Baltimore 21207



## VARIED THRUSH IN HARFORD COUNTY

*Charles R. Graham*

Mr. and Mrs. C. Ross Eck reported a male Varied Thrush at their feeder in Aberdeen from March 5 to March 13, 1978. He ate seeds and raisins. This fourth sighting for Maryland was confirmed by about 20 MOS members. The third Maryland sighting occurred earlier this same winter when another male frequented a feeder in Savage (*Md. Birdlife* 34:84).

1325 North Stepney Rd., Aberdeen 21001

### COMING EVENTS, 1980

- Jan. 3 FREDERICK Meeting. "Members Night," Hodson Sci. Bldg., 7:30.
- 4 ANNE ARUNDEL Meeting. Anne Arundel Library, West St., Apls, 8.
- 4 HARFORD Dinner meeting, Churchville Presby. Church, 6:15.
- 5 BALTIMORE Trip to Balto Harbor. Meet So. Balto. Gen. Hosp, 8.
- 6 HOWARD Columbia walk. Meet Trotter Rd. parking area, 1 pm.
- 8 KENT Coffee Watch at Alice Wolfe's, "Kentfields" on Quaker Neck Ldg. Rd., half mile before wharf, 8:30.
- 8 BALTIMORE Meeting. Shorebird field identification, Cylburn, 8.
- 12 ALLEGANY Trip to Blackwater Refuge. Contact Bill Devlin.
- 16 TALBOT Meeting. Birds of Mexico, Part I, Bob Trever. Loyola Savings & Loan, Harrison & Goldsborough, Easton, 8.
- 16 ALLEGANY Old Tools by Mike Chonko. Board of Education, 7:30.
- 17 MONTGOMERY Annual Social, pot luck dinner plus \$3, St. John's Episcopal Church, Bethesda.
- 18 CAROLINE Meeting. Ariz. Birding with Dick Kleen by M. Nuttle. St. Luke Methodist Ch., 5th & Franklin, Denton, 7:30.
- 19 HARFORD Trip to Susq. State Park. Meet Old Mill at 9 am.
- 19 MONTGOMERY Trip to Lake Needwood. Phone Tom Valega, 774-4570.
- 19 BALTIMORE Trip to Piney Run. Meet Carrolltowne Shopping Center, Rt. 26, Eldersburg, 7:30 am. S. Hardiman, 922-8689.
- 20 BALTIMORE Covered Dish Supper. Natural History of India and Nepal, Don Messersmith, Cylburn. E. Jones, 486-3442.

- Jan. 22 PATUXENT Meeting. The Everglades, Mike McChesney. St. Phillips Parish House, 6th & Main Sts., Laurel, 7:45 pm.
- 22 WASHINGTON Monthly Meeting, Emma K. Doub School. No details.
- 26 ANNE ARUNDEL Trip to Gude's Nursery. Meet at Montgomery Ward parking lot near General's Highway entrance, 8 am.
- Feb. 1 ANNE ARUNDEL Meeting. Waterfowl by Tad Eareckson. AA Library, 8.
- 2 BALTIMORE Trip to Assateague & Chincoteague. R. Orem, 486-4322.
- 2 MONTGOMERY Trip to Gude's Nursery. Meet inside entrance, 8:30.
- 5 BALTIMORE Class 5, Field Identification: Gulls & Terns, Woodpeckers & Flycatchers. Cylburn, 8 pm.
- 7 FREDERICK Meeting. The N.A. Bluebird Soc., Hodson Sci., 7:30.
- 9 FREDERICK Window birding at Hodges'. Make lunch reservations.
- 9 BALTIMORE Trip to Baltimore Harbor. So. Balto. Gen. Hosp., 8am.
- 9 HARFORD Trip to Baltimore Harbor. Ames park lot, Edgewood, 9.
- 9 ANNE ARUNDEL Trip to Sandy Point. Meet at Anglers, Rt. 50, 8 am.
- 14 KENT Coffee Watch at Busse's, Shorewood Est., Galena, 8:30.
- 15 CAROLINE Meeting. Astronomy by Dan Manka at Richardson HS, 7:30
- 16 ALLEGANY Carey Run winter fun festival. Call John Willetts.
- 16 MONTGOMERY Trip to Back River. Meet 8 am, Sewage Plant park lot.
- 16-18 ANNE ARUNDEL Coastal weekend. Contact Emily Joyce, 721-2239.
- 20 TALBOT Meeting. Birds of Mexico, Part II, Bob Trever, Loyola.
- 21 MONTGOMERY Meeting. Role of Endangered Species Veterinarian by Dr. James Carpenter. Perpetual Audit., Bethesda, 8.
- 22 BALTIMORE Annual Meeting & Social Evening. Grace Methodist Ch., N. Charles at W. Belvedere. Phone E. Jones, 486-3442.
- 23 ANNE ARUNDEL Trip to Ivy Neck. Meet Montg'y Wards parking lot, 8.
- 23 FREDERICK Trip to Gude's. Meet Culler L. Boat House, 8:30.
- 23-24 TALBOT Trip to Irish Grove and Ocean City. No details.
- 24 BALTIMORE Come-As-You-Are Tea. Dr. Philip Creighton. Towson Library, 2:45-4:45 pm. See Balto Newsletter for title.
- 26 PATUXENT Meeting. Members Night. St. Philips, 6th & Main, 7:45.
- 26 WASHINGTON Monthly Meeting. Emma K. Doub School. No details.
- Mar. 4 MONTGOMERY Trip to Nat'l Zoo. Meet park lot near duck ponds, 9:30
- 4 BALTIMORE Class 6, Field Identification: Swallows, Chickadees, Thrushes, Cylburn, 8 pm.
- 6 KENT Dinner Meeting, Rear Garage Restaurant. Vern Stotts.
- 6 FREDERICK Meeting. Waterfowl Identification, Hodson Sci., 7:30.
- 7 BALTIMORE Audubon Lecture, "Into Australia's Red Centre," by Greg & Linda McMillan. Dumbarton Jr. High, 8 pm.
- 8 FREDERICK Trip to National Zoo. Meet Culler L. Boat House, 8.
- 7 ANNE ARUNDEL Annual Meeting & bird film. AA Library, West St., 8.
- 8 MOS Board of Directors Meeting.
- 8 BALTIMORE Jr. Nature Talk, Air & Water Pollution, Cylburn, 10.
- 11 BALTIMORE Alice Kaestner Memorial Tues. Walks, first of 10 at Lake Roland. Meet R. E. Lee Park footbridge, 8 am.
- 15 HARFORD Trip to Aberdeen Proving Grd (Chapter members only).
- 15 ANNE ARUNDEL Trip to Dyke Marsh. Meet Montg'y Ward park lot, 7:30.
- 16 BALTIMORE Trip to Loch Raven & Gunpowder R. Meet Peerce's parking lot, Dulaney Valley Rd. N of bridge, 8 am.
- 18 BALTIMORE Alice Kaestner Memorial Walk. Meet Lee footbridge, 8.
- 19 TALBOT Meeting. Wrens & Communication by Gigi Snyder. Md. Room, Loyola S&L, Harrison & Goldsborough Sts., 8.